



Report on the ad-hoc meetings of the EU Victims' Rights Platform in the years 2020 – 2024

The ad hoc meetings of the Victims' Rights Platform regrouped the members of the Platform whose area of expertise is particularly relevant for the topic of the meeting. The meetings provided important insights and contributed to the Commission's activities on the implementation of the actions under the EU Strategy on victims' rights.

1. Ad hoc meetings of the EU Victims' Rights Platform in 2020

In 2020, the Commission organised the first ad hoc meetings of the EU Victims' Rights Platform as **a meeting for members of non-governmental organisations and friends**.

The meeting gathered organisations dealing with a wide range of topics related to victims' rights (e.g., child victims, victims of gender-based violence, undocumented victims, victims of hate crime, elder victims, victims in detention, victims with disabilities). The meeting gave a very good overview of common issues across the fields and brought an opportunity to put together different organisations so they could join their forces on issues such as the intersectionality of victimisation.

2. Ad hoc meetings of the EU Victims' Rights Platform in 2021

In 2021, the Commission organised seven ad hoc meetings of the EU Victims' Rights Platform. The topics of the meetings and their main takeaways are listed below:

- **Ad hoc meeting of the Victims' Rights Platform on victims of terrorism, February 2021** - the meeting was fruitful in identifying possible areas of closer cooperation among the stakeholders working in the area of victims of terrorism.
- **Ad hoc meeting of the Victims' Rights Platform on digitalisation of justice, March 2021** – participants agreed that digitalisation of communication between judicial authorities in cross-border cases would have a positive impact on victims' access to justice in general. They also highlighted that digital participation in criminal proceedings could be beneficial provided that procedural safeguards of both parties were guaranteed and there would be a sufficient personal/human element behind the technological solutions.
- **Ad hoc meeting of the Victims' Rights Platform on victims in detention, March 2021** - raising awareness about victims' rights in detention seemed to be the preferred solution to overcome the conceptual dichotomy and improve crime reporting in detention. It should be accompanied by training of detention staff, ensuring its appropriate qualification and promotion of restorative justice services. An

intersectional approach based on strengthened cooperation among prisons, detention, restorative justice and victim support should be promoted.

- **Ad hoc meeting of the Victims' Rights Platform on vulnerable adults, April 2021** – participants stressed that there should be more emphasis on practical implementation of key provisions of the Victims' Rights Directive, including right to understand and to be understood, right to access information, rights to support and protection in accordance with each victim's individual needs. There is a need to change cultural attitude towards vulnerable adults as crime victims who are often not believed or not trusted.
- **Ad hoc meeting of the Victims' Rights Platform on undocumented migrants, April 2021** - participants called for clarifying EU rules on the relationship between the Victims' Rights Directive and the Return Directive, possibly followed by guidance to Member States. Participants highlighted crosscutting issues relevant for other groups of vulnerable victims, including the intersectionality of victimization (in particular based on gender and ethnic background).
- **Ad hoc meeting of the Victims' Rights Platform and NGOs working in the area of violence against women, May 2021** - effectiveness of legislation is an issue and there is a great need to ensure that there are consequences for violations of victims' rights. The participants stressed the need for a multiagency/multidisciplinary approach to combating violence against women, that would include national authorities, support services and relevant communities.
- **Ad hoc meeting of the Victims' Rights Platform on methods of improving cooperation between the competent authorities in cross-border cases, June 2021** - the participants agreed to produce a common report, that will analyse victims' access to their rights under the Victims' Rights Directive from the perspective of victims in cross-border cases.

3. Ad hoc meetings of the EU Victims' Rights Platform in 2022

In 2022, the Commission organised **three ad hoc meetings of the EU Victims' Rights Platform**. In light of the war in Ukraine and the needs of Ukrainian victims of war crime in the EU, all ad hoc meetings were dedicated to **victims of war crimes**. One of the meetings gathered relevant non-governmental experts in the field of victims of war crime

The discussion at the meetings were very useful and their results were taken into account in preparing the Commission's activities related to the war in Ukraine, in particular the actions to support victims of war-related crimes.

4. Ad hoc meetings of the EU Victims' Rights Platform in 2023

In 2023, the Commission organised **one ad hoc meeting of the EU Victims' Rights Platform dedicated to victims of terrorism** and **two meetings focused on child victims**.

The main takeaways from the meetings are listed below:

- **Ad hoc meeting of the Victims' Rights Platform on victims of terrorism, March 2023** – the participants were updated about the next steps of the EU Centre of expertise for victims of terrorism and the activities of the Network of single contact points for victims of terrorism.

- **Ad hoc meeting of the Victims' Rights Platform on child victims, May 2023** – the ad-hoc meeting provided for a good platform to discuss the topic from different perspectives among the EU experts from the Commission, EU agencies, networks and representatives of civil society and victims themselves. Participants agreed that ensuring support and protection to child victims was a complex issue that required diverse expertise and coordination at all levels, including focus on prevention and multi-agency coordination.
- **Ad hoc meeting of the Victims' Rights Platform on child victims, October 2023** – the participants were informed about the launch of the EU campaign on victims' rights supporting Ukrainian children in the EU. They were invited to engage in the promotion of the booklet [“The Girl Who Kept Her Eyes Open”](#) of the campaign. The need for a multi-agency and systemic approach to child victims was highlighted during the discussions.

5. Ad hoc meetings of the EU Victims' Rights Platform in 2024

In 2024, the Commission organised four ad hoc meetings of the EU Victims' Rights Platform. The topics of the meetings and their main takeaways are listed below:

- **Ad hoc meeting of the EU Victims' Rights Platform on victims of hate crime, March 2024** - the discussion illustrated connections between hate crimes based on different motives and the importance to work on common solutions to improve detection, prevention of hate crimes and victims' support. The legal framework should be improved – extension of the list of the EU crimes to hate crime would allow for criminalisation of all types of hate crime in the Member States and the revision of the Victims' Rights Directive would improve victims' support and protection. There is a need to tackle underlying causes of crime underreporting such as lack of trust to police and lack of awareness about hate crime.
- **Ad Hoc meeting of the EU Victims' Rights Platform with civil society organisations, June 2024** – participants highlighted that a lot still needed to be done to achieve a victim-centred justice in the EU. Criminal justice should focus more on healing harm and preventing it from happening again and less on punishing the offender. Participants agreed that long-term strategic approach to victims' rights was essential to ensure an effective victims' rights policy. It should include raising awareness on victims' rights in our societies and on educating future judges and prosecutors on victims' rights. Several non-governmental organisations stressed the importance of a new EU Strategy on victims' rights and the continuation of the EU Victims' Rights Platform as a forum for engagement with civil society.
- **Ad hoc meeting of the EU Victims' Rights Platform on digitalisation and victims' rights, November 2024** – participants agreed that digital tools could have a great positive impact on facilitating victims' access to justice. Nonetheless, a human factor could not be marginalised, and traditional means of communication should be available as well. A solid EU level legislative framework is necessary to ensure victims' equal access to digital tools. It should provide minimum standards in relation to online crime reporting, digital communication and possibilities of online participation in criminal proceeding.
- **Ad Hoc meeting of the EU Victims' Rights Platform on the situation of EU victims of arbitrary detention in Iran, December 2024** – participants stressed that

comprehensive approach from the national authorities and support services was indispensable to ensure that victims did not suffer from secondary victimisation upon their return home. This required a coordinated approach of different institutions in charge. It was also highlighted that formal recognition of victims was important as often it opened the door to further services including support and compensation. It would also facilitate victims' healing process.